

Mono resident calls on Council to veto electronic participation in Town meetings

By Peter Richardson

One local resident is concerned by a recent amendment to Mono's procedural bylaw that allows Council to participate virtually in meetings even when there are no emergency measures in place.

Elaine Kehoe quizzed Council about the changes, feeling they should be reversed. She called on Council to reinstate the words "during a declared emergency" into the bylaw, believing that members should be attending meetings in person once the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Ms. Kehoe's reasoning was that the Municipal Act and the procedural bylaw dictated that public participation was obligatory for all Council and Committee meetings and that since many residents could not participate virtually, due to internet concerns, that this would negate their right to participate in meetings, when there was no state of emergency declared. She also objected to a clause allowing the Clerk to establish or amend procedures. She felt that this should be the sole responsibility of the Council, after consultation with the residents.

"Nothing should be changed without getting input from the residents," Ms. Kehoe said.

Mayor Laura Ryan noted that, in a report from Deputy Clerk Fred Simpson, that provincial legislations had been changed with the passing of Bill 167, concerning COVID-19, that amongst other things, changed the Municipal Act to allow for virtual meetings without a declared emergency being present. She noted that the proposed bylaw amendments, were to give the Town the flexibility to meet the new legislation.

Deputy Mayor John Creelman elaborated on this by citing several specific examples. The first being the ability for anyone, anywhere in the world, who wished to address Council, could now do so via the virtual connection. He also noted that delegations could come before Council, virtually, if they wished should in-person not be possible. Further, he said, if councillors were going to be out of town, they could still attend a Council meeting virtually, thus foregoing the necessity to cancel a meeting due to the lack of a quorum. He went on to stress that this would be a blended approach, where both personal and virtual appearance could be accommodated and thus save time and better serve the business at hand.

Fill removal

Moving on, Council next addressed the issue of the outstanding fill- removal order, against 833231 4th Line EHS and the property owner Paul Ritchie.

The overwhelming issue involved concerned the documentation that the fill had indeed been removed from the site and the regrading completed. Nearby residents insisted that no fill had been removed from the property, while the site owner had provided documentation that more than 60 truck loads had been removed to date. In addition, certain testing had been required, regarding soil contamination and as yet no acceptable results, were evident.

Several members of Council and CAO Mark Early spoke to the question. The CAO recommended that the matter be held over, pending the results of the testing, while some councillors, and Deputy Mayor Creelman, wants to see more adequate proof that the fill had indeed been removed and delivered elsewhere.

A motion was drafted stating that further documentation be provided, including weigh bills, tickets, truck waybills and receiving site receipts, further soil testing be conducted, for Hexafluorobenzene and total DDT and that confirmation be made that Mr. Ritchie's engineering firm had a representative, in attendance, during the fill removal.

Council will defer this matter until all the conditions are met.